

WISCONSIN



MAIN STREET

# Wisconsin Main Street Case Study Promotion

## “Meet and Greet” Platteville

How does a downtown capitalize on a major employer or perhaps a college or university? The Platteville Main Street Program designed an event to do just that. The “Meet and Greet” event is designed to familiarize University of Wisconsin-Platteville residence hall assistants with what the downtown has to offer. The ultimate goal, of course, is to reach the 2,700 students who live in residence halls on campus, and encourage them to spend some of their disposable income in the downtown businesses.

Members of the Platteville Main Street Promotion Committee met with two representatives from university housing and student affairs to brainstorm ways to bring UWP students downtown, which is within walking distance of the university. But, how could the Main Street Program “reach” the students? After much discussion, the Meet and Greet event started to materialize. Residence Hall Assistants (RAs) are the go-to persons for students living in the residence halls. Looking for a good burrito? Ask the RA. What to know where to get a good haircut? Ask the RA. Where do I buy a hunting license? Ask the RA. So, who better to acquaint the students with the downtown, than the RAs?

UWP personnel suggested that orientation week would be a good time for the event since RAs had some free time. The university fit the Meet and Greet into their scheduling for the fall and agreed to foot the bill for pizza and soft drinks for the 95 residence hall assistants. A downtown pizzeria provided ample space and the owner was delighted to serve 150 people on a Tuesday night.

Downtown merchants were invited to attend the event and each was given the opportunity to introduce themselves and their business, explaining what they had to offer to students. Merchants provided give-aways. One florist even provided a rose for each RA...a big hit with everyone, even the guys! The costume shop owners arrived as Pirates and posed for pictures with students. And, the Main Street Program provided literature about the program including a volunteer signup sheet. All of the gifts were placed in a Main Street shopping bag. In addition, businesses provided door prizes, such as gift baskets of personal products from the downtown pharmacy. Main Street had several volunteers on hand and UWP housing staff helped to keep things on time and moving in the right direction. The event was a big success and will be continued in the future.

The city administration, the police department, and Downtown West Bend Association are happy because valuable parking is now available, and business owners are seeing the benefits of “customer first” thinking. The program was good PR for the Downtown West Bend Association with city staff including the police department and with city residents.

